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Info

FROM: BEIRUT

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 486, NOVEMBER 1, 6 PM

PRIORITY

POLICY

IT BEING NATIONAL HOLIDAY IN LEBANON, SAW FONMIN TAKLA AT HIS HOME AFTERNOON FIRST. HANDED HIM LENGTHY PERSONAL LETTER (TEXT BEING POUCHED) DRAFTED WITH VIEW TO MAKING CLEAR MY CONCERN THAT LEBANON WILL GET TARNISHED WORLD REPUTATION IF ONE LEB-FLAG SHIP AFTER ANOTHER IS FOUND BE TRAFFICKING IN SOVIET CARGOES TO CUBA. ALSO TOOK OCCASION TO SET FORTH IN PRECISE LANGUAGE POSSIBLE FUTURE APPLICATION TO LEBANON OF SECTION 107 OF FOREIGN AID APPROPRIATIONS ACT. HELPFUL DEPTTEL 379 ARRIVED AFTER MY LETTER TYPED. ON SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER HANDED TAKLA LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY OTHER COUNTRIES, NOTABLY FLAG OF CONVENIENCE COUNTRIES PANAMA, LIBERIA AND HONDURAS.

TAKLA INDICATED FULL AWARENESS OF UNPLEASANT PROSPECTS FOR LEBANON ON SHIPPING PROBLEM BUT INSISTED GOL HAS NO MEANS OF CONTROLLING OR EVEN CONTACTING ITS NEARLY 200 FLAG VESSELS. HE NOTED GOL LEGISLATION HAD UNWISELY BEEN PASSED SEVEN YEARS AGO AND ALL GOL LEADERS RECENTLY SURPRISED TO FIND SO MANY REGISTRATIONS IN EFFECT. HE SAID HE WOULD BE OPEN TO ANY SUGGESTIONS DEPT, MIGHT HAVE.

STRESSING MY CONVICTION THAT DIFFICULTY IS NOT SO MUCH CESSATION OF RESIDUAL USG AID BUT OF LEB'S INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, I NOTED THAT PANAMA, LIBERIA AND HONDURAS HAD FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE PUBLIC PROCLAMATIONS. TAKLA SAID THIS WOULD POSE HOT POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR LEBANON

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-2- 486, NOVEMBER 1, 6 PM FROM: BEIRUT

HERE AND IN MIDEAST AS IT WOULD APPEAR GOL KNUCKLING UNDER TO USG PRESSURE. SPENCER DAVIS' AP STORY WHICH HAD BEEN FRONT PAGED IN LEB PAPERS PREVIOUS DAY HAD MADE TASK OF LEBANON'S COOPERATION IN MOVES TO CURB CUBAN SHIPPING MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. HE WAS GRATEFUL FOR DEPT'S SUBSEQUENT STATEMENT WHICH HAD AT LEAST FOR MOMENT QUELLED PUBLIC CRITICISMS OF USG "THREATS".

AFTER FURTHER PRODDING, TAKLA GAVE THOUGHT TO OTHER POSSIBILITIES. HE NOTED THAT HE AND PRESIDENT CHEHAB HAD PREVIOUS DAY TAKEN DECISION TO INFORM LEB DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR MISSIONS TO HALT ISSUING NEW REGISTRATIONS (EMBTel 481). THIS HAS BEEN DONE. HE HAD NOT EVEN DISCLOSED THIS STEP TO CABINET AND HE HOPED NOT TO ANNOUNCE IT FOR ANOTHER WEEK OR SO UNTIL PUBLIC RESENTMENT AGAINST AMERICAN "THREATS" HAS DIED DOWN. TWO ADDITIONAL STEPS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE, HE SAID. HE COULD INSTRUCT EACH OF HIS MISSIONS ABROAD TO CALL IN CAPTAIN OF ANY SHIP WHICH COMES INTO PORTS WHERE LEB MISSIONS ARE LOCATED. WHEN CAPTAINS CAME IN GOL CONSULAR OFFICERS COULD "APPLY THE LAW", I.E., RETRIEVE LEB FLAG FOR FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO TERMS OF LEB FLAG OF CONVENIENCE LEGISLATION. IN THIS RESPECT I NOTED THERE ARE CLEAR VIOLATIONS DUE TO FACT THAT NONE OF LEB-FLAG VESSELS ARE CARRYING ANY LEB SAILORS ALTHOUGH LAW REQUIRES 20 PER CENT LEB PERSONNEL. TAKLA SAID THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT HE HAS IN MIND. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO HIKE REGISTRATION FEE TO SOME EXORBITANT LEVEL

SECOND MEASURE WHICH TAKLA SAID HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO TAKE WOULD BE TO "APPLY THE LAW" WHEN REPRESENTATIVES OF LEB-FLAG VESSELS COME IN TO RENEW VALIDITY THEIR REGISTRATIONS, WHICH ARE FOR ONE YEAR ONLY.

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TAKLA SAID ABOVE SUGGESTIONS WERE BEST HE COULD THINK OF. OBVIOUSLY THEY WOULD NOT HAVE IMMEDIATE AND TOTAL EFFECT ON LEB-FLAG FLEET. HOWEVER, OVER PERIOD OF WEEKS AND MONTHS THESE MEASURES COULD IN EFFECT STIFLE WHAT FOR LEBANON IS AN EMBARRASSING BUSINESS.

TAKLA ASKED THAT HIS VIEWS BE SENT TO WASHINGTON FOR COMMENT OR FURTHER SUGGESTION. HE SAID MY LETTER WOULD BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL IN HANDLING HIS GOL COLLEAGUES. I REMINDED HIM THAT MY INTEREST IN THIS MATTER AS STATED IN MY LETTER WAS PROMPTED AS MUCH BY DESIRE TO KEEP LEBANON'S FLAG PURE IN EYES OF WORLD AS IT WAS BY USG CONSIDERATIONS. TAKLA EXPRESSED APPRECIATION BUT AGAIN ASKED FOR ANY FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FROM WASHINGTON.

COMMENT. IF TAKLA'S THREE-POINT PROGRAM (TWO NEW STEPS PLUS ONE TAKEN PREVIOUS DAY) COMMENDS ITSELF TO DEPT, WE MIGHT GIVE IT AN ASSIST BY GETTING SPOT LOCATIONS OF LEB-FLAG VESSELS (THIS CAN PROBABLY BE DONE THROUGH BEIRUT SOURCES) SO THAT SKIPPERS CAN BE CALLED IN WHEN THEY CALL AT PORTS WHERE LEB CONSULAR OFFICERS ARE LOCATED. MEANWHILE, IF LEB-FLAG VESSEL HAPPENS ENTER CUBA QUARANTINE AREA, EMBASSY WOULD HOPE WASHINGTON COULD TAKE GENERAL POSITION THAT APPLICATION OF SECTION 107 TO LEBANON NOT FEASIBLE BECAUSE IN EFFECT NO RPT NO FY 63 AID COMMITMENTS BEEN UNDERTAKEN.

MEYER

MRJ

NOTE: Advance copy Mr. Nyerger (NEA) S/S-O 550 PM 11-1-CWO-W

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